Mental Health Advocacy
Perspectives on Tobacco Cessation

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What is NAMI?

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness.
3 Levels of NAMI

NAMI National
- NAMI Board of Directors
- State Presidents Council
- Consumer Council
- Veterans Council
- Executive Directors Group

NAMI State Organizations
NAMI Affiliate Organizations
National Signature Programs

- Family-to-Family Education Program
- Provider Education Program
- Peer-to-Peer Program
- In Our Own Voice
- Hearts & Minds
- NAMI Support Group Facilitator Training
- NAMI Connection
- NAMI Basic
Communications

• Helpline
• Web site in July (700,000 visits)
• Three publications: Beginnings, Advocate and Avanzamos
• Electronic Publications
• E-News
• Stigmabusters
Tobacco and Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

• People with SMI are 2x as likely to smoke.
  People with schizophrenia are 3-4x as likely to smoke.

• People with SMI die 25 years younger due largely to conditions caused or worsened by smoking.

• Smokers with schizophrenia spend >1/4 of their total income on cigarettes.
Tobacco and Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

• Tobacco use interferes with psychiatric medications.

• Even highly addicted smokers with mental illness can quit and are more likely to succeed with a combination of medications and behavioral therapy.
More than Bans

• What if an addicted patient refuses hospitalization just because they cannot smoke in the hospital?
• If smoking alters medication levels and a patient is likely to smoke after discharge, how do we find the right dosages?
• Smoking breaks have been allowed to be an important social activity in hospitals and clinics
More than Bans

• In some facilities, profits from selling cigarettes has been an important source of revenue
• In some facilities, cigarettes proved to be a convenient reward for behavioral reinforcement
• A divide between Consumers and Families: Is smoking a priority when struggling with paternalism
More than Bans

• Violence decreased after a smoking ban
  – Smoke breaks are infrequent enough to guarantee repeated irritability of withdrawal

• Common Ground: Support Smoking Cessation with medications and psychosocial interventions
  – People with SMI may require longer support groups
Making the Case

• Tobacco can be a greater health risk than medication non-compliance

• No one wants to be manipulated:
  – Tobacco industry trade group: “cigarette smoking is becoming a downscale social activity”
  – RJ Reynolds marketing survey: this downscale demographic is “more impressionable to marketing/advertising… they’re more susceptible. They’re less formed intellectually… more maleable.”